

## **Policies and Standards Committee (PSC)**

**Thursday 28 November 2019**

**QQI Boardroom, Denzille Lane, Dublin 2. (11:am – 1:30pm)**

**Present:** Anne Walsh - Committee Chair  
Niamh O'Reilly - Board Member  
Barbara Kelly - QQI Executive Member  
Bryan Maguire - QQI Executive Member  
Aileen Ponton - International Expert  
Bryan Fields - National Expert  
Lucien Bollaert - International Expert  
Aoife Sweeney – National Expert

**In attendance:** Peter Cullen – Head of Research and Standards (QQI Key Executive for the PSC)  
Paul Brady - QQI Secretary  
Paula Gaffney – QQI (Item 4.2)  
Mary Sheridan - QQI (Item 5.1.2)  
John O'Connor – QQI (Item 5.1.3)

**Apologies:** Daire Keogh - National Expert

In opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed the Members and Executive to this Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) meeting. The Chair noted that Aoife Sweeney (CORU), has joined the Committee (as a national expert) and welcomed Aoife to her first meeting. The Chair acknowledged that the planned meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 was cancelled owing to an insufficient agenda for consideration by the PSC.

### **1 1.1 Declaration of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest expressed by any member.

**2 Minutes of Meeting of the Policies and Standards Committee (PSC) of 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (For Approval)**

The Minutes of the Meetings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 25 June 2019, were **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters Arising from Minutes**

**3.1 Incorrect Classification of Agenda Item**

- *Incorrect classification of item 7.1b on Agenda of PSC meeting 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (For Noting)*

The Committee noted that the Agenda for the Policies and Standards Committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 contained an error of classification. 7.1a Explanatory Memorandum and 7.1b Roles, Responsibilities and Codes of Conduct for Reviewers/Evaluators were classified incorrectly as a White Paper and should have been included under Agenda Item 8 any Other Business. The paper was categorized For Noting by the PSC which was correct.

**4. Standards – Review and Development**

**4.1 Deactivation of Unused or Little Used CAS Awards 2019 Update (For Information)**

- *4.1 Explanatory Memorandum*

The Committee noted the successful completion of QQI's first annual review of unused or little used CAS awards with 197 awards deactivated on the 31 October 2019 following an opportunity for engagement with interested stakeholders and providers. The Committee noted also that this type of review would be conducted by QQI on an annual basis.

**4.2 Early Learning and Care (ELC)**

- *Explanatory Memorandum*
- *Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 and 6: Annotated for QQI Early Learning and Care (ELC) Awards (For Adoption)*
- *ELC Awards Deactivation and Validation (For Agreement)*
- *Appendix A - Consultation Thematic Summary*
- *Appendix B - ELC Standards Advisory Group Meeting Note*

The Committee considered the revised standards for Early Learning and Care (ELC) awards expressed in the form of annotations to the NFQ Professional Award-type Descriptors (PATD) at level 5 and 6, and noted that these annotations explained how to interpret the PATD indicators

for programmes leading to ELC awards and that the annotations also included Special Validation Conditions. The Committee noted that ELC PATD annotations at levels 7 and 8 had been developed under the leadership of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) which together with those for levels 5 & 6 should have a significant positive impact, contribute to further professionalising the sector and facilitating the development of efficient progression pathways between the different FET and HET ELC qualifications in the NFQ. The Committee considered the issues raised during the consultation and noted in particular the importance of Professional Practice Placement and Assessment methodology and advised the Executive that this is an area for further consideration and additional specificity and clarity within the Special Validation Conditions. The Committee welcomed this development of the ELC awards.

The Policies and Standards Committee agreed to **ADOPT** the annotated Professional Award-type Descriptor for Early Learning and Care levels at NFQ 5 & 6. The Committee **AGREED** to the proposed schedule of deactivation of specified CAS awards. However, the two Major awards associated with this deactivation were not included in this schedule and they will be brought to the next PSC meeting for deactivation agreement. The Committee also **AGREED** that School Age Childcare minor 5N1718 be retained pending the development of a new award in this area.

#### **4.3 F-gas Handling**

- *Explanatory Memorandum (For Adoption)*
- *Handling F-gas Refrigerants Level 5*
- *Handling F-gas Mobile Aircon Systems Level 5*
- *Handling F-gas Fire Extinguishants Level 5*

The Members noted the standards presented and considered the observations made. These included the decision to reference each special purpose award with the relevant European Commission Regulation. The Committee noted that the purpose statements are in line with the EU legislation and that the learning outcomes are those stated in the relevant EU legislation. The Committee acknowledged that the draft award standards have not fully been agreed by the Standard Advisory Group and have yet to be published for public consultation. The Committee advised that as part of the consultation process SOLAS should be kept informed of developments as it is relevant to some to apprenticeship programmes.

After consideration and discussion, the Committee agreed to **ADOPT** the standards provided there are no revisions or only minor revisions to the awards after agreement by the Standard Advisory Group and the Consultation process for the following Special Purpose awards at level 5 on the NFQ:

- Level 5 Handling F-gas Refrigerants,
- Level 5 Handling F-gas Mobile Aircon Systems and
- Level 5 Handling F-gas Fire Extinguishants.

## **5. Policy and Guidelines**

The Committee noted the new layout of the Policy and Guidelines section and the new headings which reflect the functions of the PSC and are intended to bring greater consistency to how documents are presented to the Committee.

### **5.1 Policy Context**

#### **5.1.1 Commencement of Amended Legislation (*For Information*)**

- *Partial Commencement of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Amendment Act, 2019*

The Committee was updated on the progress on the commencement of parts of the Quality and Qualifications Amendment Act, 2019. Although the Act was signed into law on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019, the changes do not come into effect until the relevant sections are commenced. The Committee noted that a number of new Policies will require development and some existing Policies and Procedures may require some changes which would be brought to the PSC for approval in due course.

#### **5.1.2 Corporate Fitness Criteria (*For Advice*)**

- *Explanatory Memorandum*
- *Criteria to be satisfied by specified providers of education and training programmes, including awarding bodies, that engage with QQI in the context of the 2012 (Amendment) Act.*

The Committee was informed that QQI is currently tasked with the preparation of draft criteria for Ministerial regulations, which will specify “corporate fitness” criteria to be satisfied by specific providers of education and training programmes and awarding bodies that engage with QQI and the National Framework of Qualifications. Members considered and discussed the appropriateness of the eligibility criteria and noted that the corporate fitness criteria will be important in the context of the management of the learner protection fund. The Committee noted this development and that following the agreement of the initial set of criteria by the expert group, a number of pilot projects will be undertaken with providers to ascertain their reasonableness from an implementation perspective.

### **5.1.3 Relating Irish NFQ with European Frameworks (For Information)**

- *Updating EQF Referencing and QF-EHEA Self-Certification*

The Committee was informed of progress on the updating of the reports on the referencing of the Irish NFQ with the European Qualifications Framework and the Certification of the Compatibility of the Irish NFQ with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. The Committee noted that as it is over ten years since Ireland last referenced the NFQ, it is timely that QQI update both reports in 2020. The Committee noted that a project plan to manage the work was approved by the QQI Programme Board in November 2019.

## **5.4 Green Papers**

### **5.4.1 Green Paper on the Qualifications System (For Information)**

The Committee received a verbal update on the progress of the Green Paper on the Qualifications System. The Committee were informed that following feedback from key stakeholders on the draft Green Paper on Qualifications a shorter version was produced which includes a relatively small number of broad questions for stakeholders to consider. The original paper will be updated for publication as a Technical Paper on the Qualifications System alongside the new Green Paper on the Qualifications System which QQI aims to publish in Q1 2020.

## **5.5 White Papers**

### **5.5.1 Revised Monitoring Policy and Focused Reviews of Programmes (For Approval and Recommendation)**

- *Explanatory Memorandum*
- *Revised Monitoring Policy*
- *Procedures for Focused Reviews of Programmes of Education and Training Validated by QQI*

The Committee considered the draft Revised Monitoring Policy which will replace the original Monitoring Policy developed in 2014. The Committee noted that the Policy has been revised to reflect the more mature and established QA relationship in place between QQI and providers and noted QQI's approach to its monitoring function. The Committee noted that the revised monitoring Policy is supplemented by draft Procedures for Focused Reviews of Programmes of Education and Training Validated by QQI. The proposed procedures will govern QQI's approach to conducting focused reviews of programme validation. They will apply to all providers with

validated programmes. The committee noted that QQI would confer with SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority before a focused review of a provider commenced.

Following discussion on aspects of the policies and procedures involved, the Members AGREED to Approve the draft white papers to proceed to public consultation and to recommend them to the Board for adoption subject to only minor changes being required following consultation.

## **6. Procedures Relevant to PSC's Functions**

### **6.1 Policy approval Protocol** *(For advice and Approval)*

- *Explanatory Memorandum*
- *Outline PSC Approval Process for Policies, Guidelines and Standards*

The Committee considered the paper outlining PSC's approval process for Policies, Guidelines and Standards.

The draft protocol outlines the steps and actions to be undertaken by the various participants involved and specifically how the Committee fulfils its functions. It was suggested that the Executive prepares a flowchart outlining the various processes for the next PSC meeting and elaborate the protocol for the approval process for all kinds of documents including policy, QA Guidelines, award standards and operational procedures which will be presented to the PSC for formal approval at its next meeting. The Executive also suggested the development of a checklist for Members, to support consistency, on what to address when leading on an agenda item, which will be brought to the next PSC meeting for discussion.

The Committee **APPROVED** the draft protocol for implementation on an interim basis.

## **7. New Publications since Last PSC Meeting** *(For Information)*

The Committee noted several new publications from QQI since its previous meeting.

- Accreditation Approval of Higher Education Programmes by Professional Bodies
- Report on QQI Award Classification Distribution for QQI Higher Education and Training Awards (2012-2017)
- Irelands Framework of Good Practice Research Degree Programmes
- ENQA Agency Review – QQI 2019
- Quality in Irish Higher Education
- Quality in Irish Further Education and Training
- Annual Report 2018
- Assessment of Learners and Learning – What you had to say
- Comparing Qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand: A Guide

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **8.1 Presentation –CORU (For Noting)**

The introductory presentation noted the importance of the role CORU plays in protecting the public as Ireland's multi-profession health regulator responsible for regulating health and social care professionals. It explained that CORU consists of the Health and Social Care Professional Council and implementing regulation to 17 professional Registration Boards which fosters high professional standards of conduct, education, training and competence by setting the education and training standards for those professions.

### **8.2 Presentation –Reflections (For Noting)**

The Chair noted this was the final meeting for Lucien Bollaert, International Expert, who will step down from the Committee on 28 February 2020. Lucien provided the Committee with 'Goodbye Reflections' with regard to its functions and deliberations over the last four years. The Chair, on behalf of QQI and the Members of the Committee, thanked Lucien for his important input into the work of the Committee to date and wished him the very best for the future.

## **9. PSC Meeting Schedule**

The date of the next meeting is 12 March 2020, Denzille Lane.

June 2020 -Possibly 4<sup>th</sup> and Venue to be agreed.

September 2020 – Date to be Agreed

November 2020 – Date to be Agreed

In closing, the Chair thanked the Members of the Committee and the QQI Executive for their contributions and participation in the meeting.